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1933 WEATHER REVIEW

A radio talk by J. B. Kincer, Weather Bureau, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, Thursday, January 4, 1934.

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How do you do, folks?

Mr. Salisbury has requested that we give you a brief resumé, or a birdseye view, of the principal weather features experienced in different parts of the United States during the year just closed. Well, at the outset, we must remember that this is a pretty big country of ours, and, during the course of a year, nearly all known brands of weather usually are felt in one place or another. However, we maintain official weather stations in nearly every country of the United States, and from their records, at the end of the year, a pretty good picture is afforded as to just what happened in the way of weather, both that which was naturally or normally behaved, and that which defied conventions and went on a freakish rampage, as it were.

First, suppose we open our temperature book and scan the records for the same 5,000 stations. We find that the average temperature for the year, as a whole, in line with trends for a long time past, was above normal over practically the entire country. About normal warmth prevailed in some of the far Western States, but, in general, the year was abnormally warm, with some stations reporting an average daily temperature for the entire twelve months as much as 4° above normal. In more detail, we find for the early part of the year, that January and February were warm in Central and Eastern States and decidedly cold in the far West; some temperature readings were low enough to make one shiver, even if thought of in midsummer. January was not so bad, for we find the lowest temperature reported for the entire country to be 39° below zero at a couple of places in Minnesota. This, however, was comparatively springlike to what occurred in Alaska where Tanana scored 68° below zero on January 28. However, what January lacked for extremely low temperatures in the States was more than made up in February, when a station in the Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming, turned in a report of 66° below zero on the 9th of the month. Other close runners up include Colorado, with a minimum of 54° below zero; Idaho 57° below; Minnesota, 55° below; Montana, 52° below, and Oregon 54° below zero. By the way, that 66° below zero in Wyoming was the lowest official temperature ever recorded in the United States, the previous low record being -65° in eastern Montana, on January 18, 1888. The accepted lowest natural temperature ever observed on the earth's surface is 90° below zero in northern Siberia.

Just thinking about such low temperatures is enough to make one feel rather frozen up, so let's move up a few months to something less frigid. The summer of 1933 was warmer than normal throughout the entire country. Beginning with June, every State, except Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island, reported a maximum temperature of 100° or higher at some place in the State during the month. Arizona and California had the highest score, each with a record of 120° , Arizona at Gila Bend, and California at Greenlands Ranch in Death Valley. For July, all the States, except Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, and Delaware, had maximum temperatures of 100° or higher, with Greenlands Ranch, Calif., topping the list with 127° , on July 26. For August, some half dozen States in the East had maxima just under 100° , and all other scored above the century mark, with Greenlands Ranch again leading, with 127° on August 12.

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In passing, we might remind you that this station, located in Death Valley, shows that it is the hottest place in the United States. Its highest temperature of record was 134°, observed on July 10, 1913. This last summer, the maximum at Greenlands Ranch passed definitely above the 100-degree mark on June 7, and from that date to October 9, or for 125 successive days, it ranged from 100° to 127° for every day. Think of it, 125 days in succession, with temperatures from 100° to 127°. The all-time maximum temperature of 134°, just mentioned for Greenlands Ranch, stood as a world-high record until 1923, when it was slightly exceeded by a reading of 136° at a point in northern Africa.

The fall of 1933 had above normal temperatures in nearly all sections of the country, the Western States being especially warm with the average temperature for the three fall months ranging from 4° to 6°, or more, above normal. By normal we mean the long-time average.

Unseasonable warmth continued during the last month of the year, December, until near the close when a severe cold wave, originating several days earlier in Alaska, swept down over the Northwestern States the day before Christmas and reached the Atlantic Coast on the morning of the 27th, or 3 days later. It did not penetrate the more southern States, but from the Potomac and Ohio Valleys northward and northwestward the cold was intense, though previous low temperature records were broken only in a comparatively limited number of cases. Some stations in Iowa, Michigan, New York, and New England had the lowest temperatures of record for December, and a few places in New England established new all-time lows, but at the same time the more western States were enjoying one of the warmest winter weeks of history. Except for this brief cold wave, the winter, so far, has been remarkably mild; freezing temperatures have not yet occurred in the more southern districts.

So much for the year's temperature, and now we'll take a look at our rainfall records and see how these line up. We find precipitation for the year, in general, was unusually scanty, and several large areas were decidedly dry. The yearly totals were above normal from West Virginia and the Potomac Valley northward to southern New England, in some southeastern coast sections, and locally elsewhere, principally in parts of the central valleys and in the far Northwest. They were decidedly deficient in much of Virginia and in the Carolinas; some places in North Carolina had the driest year of record. It was dry also in the northern Great Plains and over a large area of the Southwest, centering in Western Texas and southern New Mexico, where less than half to only about two thirds of the normal annual amount of rainfall was received. The northern Great Basin of the West was markedly dry, as was California, in general, until near the end of the year. As usual, we find some freakish rainfalls. For example, last January Los Angeles had 8.5 inches of rain and following this the entire 10 months from February to November, inclusive, had less than 2 inches, while an amount equal to more than half of the yearly normal was crowded into the last week of the year, the total for this week being 8.3 inches.

As a rule, snowfall during last winter was scanty, but some impressive records come from the far Northwest. For example, at Crater Lake, Oregon, last winter's snow season began in October with 33 inches of snow for the month; November had 61 inches; December 156 inches; January 256 inches; February 130 inches; March 91 inches; April 49 inches, and May 103 inches. Apparently, this was enough for the Snow God for a single season, and the gates were shut with May. Now, this made, for the entire season, from October to May, a total

fall of 879 inches of snow -- more than 73 feet, or enough to cover a five-story house. How would you like to have a front walk to keep clear of snow at Crater Lake. It may be of interest to note that this snowfall record of 879 inches is just 5 inches short of the greatest seasonal fall of record for the United States, which was 884 inches at Tamarack, California, during the winter of 1896-97.

The weather of the year was decidedly unfavorable for most major farm crops, except cotton. Winter wheat difficulties began during the seeding period of the preceding fall when heavy producing sections of the western wheat belt were hard hit by drought, which prevented proper germination, and the crop consequently went into the winter in poor condition, resulting later in heavy abandonment of acreage. The eastern belt, or soft wheat territory fared rather well, but the heat and drought of early summer played further havoc in the West. In the spring wheat region weather during the early period of growth was generally favorable; seeding was accomplished in good season, germination was satisfactory, and early growth and color promising. However, as the season advanced unfavorable warmth and dryness developed, taking heavy toll, and production was light.

Corn got off to a poor start because persistent wetness unfavorably delayed planting. Later in the season heat and drought in the Western and Northwestern parts of the corn belt caused heavy damage, especially in July, but the weather was better east of the Mississippi River. Fall conditions were favorable for maturing and drying out the crop and there was very little damage by frost; in Iowa 97 percent of the crop matured safely. Cotton was generally favored. This is normally a dry and warm weather crop so that the comparatively scanty rainfall and high temperatures in the South favored growth and maturity. Cotton also matured early and conditions, on the whole, were favorable for picking and ginning.

Generally speaking the fall season had mild open weather and frosts, as a rule, came later than in an average year, but at the same time many areas continued unfavorably dry, especially the Southeastern, Southwestern and Northwestern States. In the Northwest the moisture supply has been scanty for a good many years and as a result the sub-soil is very dry. This means of course, that for a good crop season next year, it will be necessary that rainfall during the coming spring and early summer be in generous amounts. We trust that this will be so. In conclusion may we wish you, one and all, a happy and prosperous New Year, with the added hope that the weather of 1934 will favor our greatest of all American industries--Agriculture.

